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Press Release

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North Carolina Teen Pregnancies Hit Record Low for 6th Consecutive Year *Teen Pregnancy Rate Down 67% Since 1990*

DURHAM, N.C. (OCTOBER 7, 2014) – North Carolina's teen pregnancy rate fell 11% last year, hitting a record low for a 6th consecutive year, according to new data provided by the North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics and released by the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Campaign of North Carolina (APPCNC). Statewide, 11,178 girls ages 15-19 experienced a pregnancy in 2013.

The 2013 teen pregnancy rate was 35.2 per 1,000 15-19-year-old girls. In other words, only 3.5% of 15-19-year-old girls in North Carolina experienced a pregnancy last year.

Other highlights from the newly released data include:

- Reduced pregnancies among girls of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, helping to minimize some historical disparities. Pregnancies to white, black, and Hispanic teens dropped 13%, 11% and 7%, respectively.
- Reducing the teen pregnancy rate also reduced all potential outcomes of a teen pregnancy. The teen birth rate dropped by 11% and the teen abortion rate dropped by 13%.
- 75% of counties saw teen pregnancy decrease in 2013.
- Less than one-quarter (24.3%) of pregnancies happened to a girl who has been pregnant before, the lowest proportion of repeat pregnancies in state history.
- North Carolina's teen pregnancy rate is 67% lower than when it peaked in 1990 at a rate of 105.4 per 1,000 girls ages 15-19.

Nationwide, researchers have attributed teen pregnancy declines to increased use of birth control, the availability of highly effective long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) like IUDs and the Implant, and a slight increase in the average age when teens first engage in sexual intercourse. North Carolina communities have focused on facilitating these trends.

Teen Pregnancy's Changing Face

Part of the decline in teen pregnancy has been driven by the shrinking number of pregnancies to minors, which now account for only 29% of the state's teen pregnancies. A full 71% of all adolescent pregnancies in North Carolina happen to 18-19-year-old girls.

"The face of teen pregnancy isn't *16 and Pregnant*," said APPCNC CEO Kay Phillips. "We have always focused on encouraging parents, schools, and community groups to lay the groundwork for smart decision-making with age-appropriate, effective sex education. Now, we're supplementing those strategies by helping people connect teens – especially older teens – with the most effective birth control methods as they reach the years when sexual activity is typical."

A Broader Understanding of Best Practices

More schools and community organizations have offered evidence-based pregnancy prevention education as research has overwhelmingly illustrated the benefits. However, experts have increasingly stressed the need to provide sexually active young people with LARCs, highly effective birth control methods which are associated with drastically lower teen pregnancy rates. Last week, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended Implants and IUDs as the preferred first-line contraceptive method for sexually active teens.

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiatives (TPPI) has been successful with both strategies. Pregnancy prevention programs in 21 counties have provided younger teens with evidence-based and evidence-informed education programs. In addition, TPPI funds 22 programs in 21 counties to help young parents gain parenting and life skills while avoiding a subsequent pregnancy.

TPPI's Adolescent Parenting Program has been especially effective at ensuring that participating young women get education and resources to obtain contraceptive care, and tools to select more effective birth control methods. One in four Adolescent Parenting Program participants uses a LARC compared with only 7% of teen patients seen in the state's federally funded Title X clinics in local health departments.

"We see young people waiting longer to have sex and we see them better educated about birth control, which is great," said Phillips. "But our systems break down when our health care providers don't know about best practices in adolescent care or when young people are only offered traditional contraceptive methods like the Pill or condoms."

Planned Parenthood Health Systems in New Hanover County seamlessly combines evidence-based home visiting, peer group support, education, and access to medical care in their Adolescent Parenting Program. Participants, most of whom are 18-19-year-old parents, receive the *Partners for a Healthy Baby* curriculum, which has been proven to reduce rates of child abuse, improve health outcomes for participants' children, promote family stability, and increase young parents' economic self-sufficiency. The comprehensive approach to education, support, and medical care has helped 58.3% of participants choose LARC to prevent a subsequent pregnancy.

"The dramatic decline in teen pregnancy is a remarkable accomplishment for North Carolina," notes Phillips.

"Continuing the combination of effective prevention programs, smart public policy, and best practices in birth control use is the way to keep up the fantastic trend."

Additional Resources:

Snapshot of North Carolina Data: <http://www.appcnc.org/data/map/northcarolina>

Data for Each North Carolina County: <http://www.appcnc.org/data/map>

Historical Data: <http://www.appcnc.org/data/state-statistics/archived-state-statistics>

NC State Center for Health Statistics: <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/data/vital.cfm>

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APPCNC is North Carolina's nonprofit leader in preventing adolescent pregnancy through advocacy, collaboration and education. Learn more at www.appcnc.org.